

## The Story of North Hill

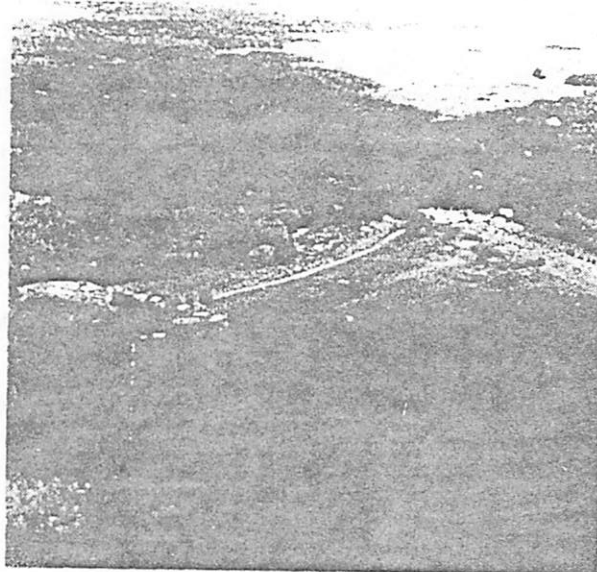
By THE REV. CANON ROBERT MERRY

The sun will rise on Earth Day, April 22, first striking Duxbury's Captain's Hill and the Standish Monument, as they are the highest points in town. Then it will flood North Hill, a second highest promontory. As it floods this spot, it will highlight several square yards of the North Hill Golf Course filled with vehicles and equipment brought to signify Earth Day and the means Duxbury employs to preserve the earth, protect the environment and prosper the life style of its citizens and taxpayers.

Clergy of the town will lead a ceremony of celebration of the earth with readings from appropriate historic sources. In this way, the partnership of theology and ecology will be reaffirmed and concerned and sensitive citizens will join in. North Hill was chosen as the site for this testimony partly because it is town property; it is also centrally located and it is a showcase of the town's concern to preserve open space. In point of fact, it almost became a cluster of condos and cottages, and was saved from this sad fate by the action of some imaginative town leaders. Its historic location places it midway between Duxbury's most populous sections. This emphasizes its appropriateness for a location for Earth Day's recognition: It speaks eloquently of Duxbury's ecological concern.

My father bought North Hill around 1910 after he had become well established in the retail meat business, which had flourished as part of the extension of a busy commercial center surrounding the Old Cable Office. He often boasted later about the sharp financial deal he drove in acquiring it. He paid for the land with a \$1,000 check Lot Phillips gave him for the lumber rights on the property. Building wooden box containers in a day before corrugated cardboard or plastics had come in was a thriving enterprise at the time, and this sale was a good one for both parties. Father was careful to save a grove of tall pines which stood at the brow of the hill that had given the land its name.

I was later to learn from my Partridge Academy Principal, Robert Cushman, that these trees were called "Tops'l trees" and served as a landfall for sailing ships heading for Boston from London and Lisbon. This was of course before the Standish Monument was erected. The story goes that as ships cleared Cape Cod sailors were sent to the "top sail" spars to watch for these trees and upon sighting them head northwest to Boston. Unhappily, hurricanes and lightning storms have



Aerial view of North Hill Golf Course

drove us off. Harry and I later spent thousands of dollars in legal and court fees, all to no avail until one day Harry died, and then Mary helped us to some sort of compromise and we were close friends from then on. She was delighted when news reached her in her nursing home that father had bought her old house for his retirement years.

Meanwhile North Hill grew apace as more and more acres of land were added to the original 80. Corn and potato and alfalfa fields soon flourished from this uniquely fertile clay soil. It furnished ample fodder to fill 2 silos and this was enough "ensilage" to last through the winter.

At this time there were also 3 or 4 other dairy farms in town. One was that of Knowles Parker, whose farm ran roughly about the extent of the present Harrison St. golf course. The Bay Farm dairy occupied most of the land at the western end of Kingston Bay and was owned by the Atherton Lorings. This was a "certified milk" farm, that in the days before pasteurization followed prescribed guidelines for cleanliness and health of the cows. Here milking attendants were required also to have regular medical checkups.

It was leased in 1980 to Dick, Bob and Rusty Gunnarson, who invested much money into modernizing the greens, purchasing new golf carts and other equipment to make it what it is today -- a perfect golf course and a real asset to the town. The large cow and horse barns were razed along with other outbuildings and the modern efficient clubhouse with bar upstairs was erected. The Gunnarsons feel that the lean early days are past, so much so that we had to schedule the ceremony at 6 am (close to sunrise) or we'd be overrun by golfers.

They do have some dreams and hopes and plans for the future -- namely, making it into an 18-hole course. This would double the income, and facing the budget problems as the citizens of Duxbury are now faced with -- the property tax is as high as people can stand -- this plan has received some support in the town leadership. I favor it, and I also favor the development of other recreational facilities (a jogging trail for one, and a motorbike race course for another), for we do have the space and these and other items could bring in more revenue.

As guests and citizens of the town assemble for the salute to the earth on Sunday, April 22 at 6 and observe this jewel of the earth we call North Hill and the equipment they pay for to protect us in our homes, on the bay and beach, and provide us with safe drinking water thus making this spot on the planet a desirable place to live, it is indeed appropriate that we should express our thanks and praise to all those responsible for bringing it to us.

### LAYOFFS

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education teacher; and Mary Stenson, an elementary and intermediate school speech therapist.

In other business, the committee accepted the resignation of Judith Knecht who has taught 4th grade at Alden for the past 5 years and plans to relocate to Florida. The resignation is effective June 30.

Also, the committee appointed as volunteer coaches: Ralph Thomas, 9th grade baseball; Mary Mahoney, high school girls tennis; and Richard Keigh Sr, high school golf.

In other business, the committee approved laying off 5 tenured teachers. The staff reductions, which are effective June 30, will save about \$180,000 next year.

The committee also voted not to reappoint 27 non-tenured teachers, 9 who work part time.

The 6 tenured teachers who will receive layoff notices are high school business teachers Joanne Gouzeoules and

The story goes that as ships cleared Cape Cod sailors were sent to the "top sail" spars to watch for these trees and upon sighting them head northwest to Boston. Unhappily, hurricanes and lightning storms have destroyed all these trees, but one still stands, with some broken limbs to testify to the ravages of a New England climate.

My sister Ruth Krueger, a teacher in Duxbury schools for many years, now in her mid-80's, recalls the early days of the new North Hill family farm with our mother laid low by poison ivy and father cut up by bull briars -- a major effort was the pulling of stumps by the horses. This was much more difficult than today's procedures whereby a bulldozer simply upends the stump and a front loader carries it away. I remember well the hitching of a horse to a large stump and by an elaborate system of ropes and blocks and tackles pulls the stump up out of the ground. I remember a sketch of stump-pulling by a horse that appeared, I believe, in the *Boston Post*. I recall also chopping up these stumps with great labor to use for kindling our wood fires.

A simple house was soon erected for a future caretaker. This was soon followed by a horse barn and then a cow barn. Most homes in Duxbury continued the traditional homestead style of living located on a 10 - 20 acre parcel of ground for a family vegetable garden. There was usually a barn for a horse and wagon and a family cow, with a cellar for a pig or 2 to slaughter in the fall having fattened on family garbage all summer. A modest yard somewhere out back with an entrance -- perhaps into the barn, provided the family's egg supply. Father saw a chance to supply milk to homes during the early spring before the cow "freshened" (i.e., gave birth to its annual calf) and so the North Hill dairy farm was born and prospered.

These early days of North Hill as I can recall were dominated by a battle over rights of way. North Hill as today's golfers and visitors know can be reached from several routes. A road through what is now developing as Hound's Ditch from Tremont St., another that begins at West St. and follows Modoc and then goes to the left over what used to be an old mill dam. This is at the northern end of North Hill Marsh. The main access was directly from West St. right through what had become father's cow pasture. An M.I.T. graduate named Harry Priest returned to the soil and owned land beside the mill dam and insisted on using this last right of way. Father put up fences and gates and as fast as he did so, Harry would chop them down. Father even dynamited the road, but Harry and some friends refilled the hole with some of father's gravel from a nearby pit. Eddie Merry (son of Joe, the ice man -- now living on Chapel St.), and I walked down to inspect the refilling job, and as Eddie dug his heel in to see how firm the roadway was, Mary Sands, Harry's housekeeper, dashed out of the shrubbery where she had concealed herself, swinging an axe and

prescribed guidelines for cleanliness and health of the cows. Here milking attendants were required also to have regular medical checkups.

We dealt with the problem of milk preservation by holding 2 delivery routes daily. My 2 early college summers I spent on this task, delivering 500 quarts of milk a day, 250 roughly on each trip. I would rise at 4 am, deliver my milk until 8 o'clock when I'd return to the farm for breakfast. This took care of the milk from the night before. My late morning trek consisted of the milk just taken from the cows, and loaded while I ate breakfast. My first route took me to South Duxbury, Alden Heights and Standish Shore. My second included Washington St. and Duxbury Village and Powder Point. One of the sights I remember most vividly is the New York to Boston passenger boat of the Eastern Steamship lines that had cleared the Cape Cod Canal and was on her way to Boston. I could tell whether I was early or late by the position of this ship on the horizon. One of my customers was the Mayor of Boston, whose house was surrounded by secret service men because of the tension surrounding the Sacco-Vanzetti trials.

When supermarkets made their appearance and home deliveries dried up, father kept his cows and delivered milk wholesale in huge 40-quart cans to first Bay Farm and then White Brothers, who finally took over the farm. It was at this time that my brother Stan remembers milking the cows at 5 am, loading these huge cans on the pickup and driving them to Bay Farm. After loading he would take the train at Kingston and go to his classes at trade school in Boston.

When my brother John took over the farm, he installed modern farm machinery such as milking machines and tractors, hoping to cut labor costs and retain a competitive business position. But it was no use, as milk prices plummeted to below 7 cents a quart and he was forced to reassess his position. He hit upon the plan of a golf course which the Plymouth bank was glad to finance and the North Hill Golf Course was born. It was slow getting going as a solid-business deal, and for a year or so a national developer seized upon the site as a perfect locale for a series of condominiums and clusters of cottages. North Hill with its gorgeous 360 degree view and surroundings seemed ideal for the enterprise, but hard times fell on the project and bankruptcy soon followed.

The bank had to foreclose and happily the town under some imaginative leadership bought the property for \$770,000 if I recall correctly. It must have been quite a financial stretch for the town as we had just acquired another piece of land, the Bay Farm area and this added quite an extra piece of open property. This again is why North Hill is a most appropriate place to celebrate Earth Day. The date of this acquisition was 1977. So the town now owned a prime piece of open land and a splendid recreational facility.

The committee also voted not to reappoint 27 non-tenured teachers, 9 who work part time.

The 6 tenured teachers who will receive layoff notices are high school business teachers Joanne Gouzoules and Donna LeRoy; high school mathematics teacher Deborah Hogan; high school social studies teacher Mary Lee Schwaller; intermediate school English teacher Carol Sutherland and Marjorie Hurley; a part-time teacher for the hearing impaired at the elementary and intermediate schools.

School Supt. Donald Kennedy said he expects about 6 or 7 of the 27 non-tenured teachers to be rehired after students' course selections are completed and tabulated.

The contract calls for teachers who will not be rehired in September to be notified by April 15. Many school systems give notices to more teachers than they expect to lay off. Some could be recalled once more information is available about funding for the next fiscal year.

The 27 non-tenured teachers who were not reappointed are:

From the Alden School - Elaine Atkinson, Joan Beck, Susan Brennan (who also teaches at Chandler), Linda Crowley, Gail Currie-Maguire, Regina Griffin, Barbara Hillier, Margaret Kelleher, Nancy Lyons, Deborah Morris, Janet Ritch and Kathy Sturges.

From the Chandler School - Sheila Arpe, Catherine Breen, Amy Garbaczski, Denise Lamare, Karen Vaughan and Kathleen Walsh.

From the intermediate school - Paula Cashman, Ronald King, Michael McGuire, Ann Samuels (who also teaches at the high school) and Rosemary Spurway.

From the high school - Cynthia Dufour, Lynn Perekisli, Talbot Smith and Sue Ann Thyng.

The committee approved the transfer of 10 staff members to other departments in the fall. Kennedy said that most of the 10 will be taking over courses previously taught by the teachers who were not reappointed.

